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ABSTRACT

A point of view on the subject of life-long education is presented. The viewpoint espoused is that the academic community should make an effort to attract to the campus a group of citizens who showed interest in keeping up their education and understanding of contemporary developments. When this program was undertaken, a series of 40 lectures were delivered to such a group by the leading lights of the scholarly community. Various surveys conducted over a period of years on the subject of adult education are mentioned. Finally, the role of the university in this field is discussed. Currently, the universities in developing countries are still searching for a direction to follow in life-long education. (CK)

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STATEMENT REGARDING LIFE-LONG EDUCATION

by

Prof. M.V. MATHUR

It has been my privilege to be associated as an organizer or as a participant in a number of activities, conferences, seminars and committees relating to various aspects of life-long education. Broadly speaking these could be classified under three heads:

(i) Extramural activities in Maharajas College, Jaipur, and University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

(ii) Suggestions for programmes of adult education and life-long education for adoption in universities and colleges as a member of the Indian Education Commission, President of the Indian University Association for Continuing Education, and as Chairman of Task Force on University Education for India's Fifth Five-Year Plan.

(iii) As organizer, promoter, and participant of some national and international programmes relating to life-long education and out-of-school education.

As a young "don" working at the Headquarters of a Princely State(1) in pre-independent India, I felt an urgent need for bridging the gulf between the "campus" and the "community". On account of certain historical circumstances the citizens of my campus town had been denied opportunities for keeping track with new thought and ideas that were emerging in the realm of scientific and socio-economic development. It was felt that the academic community should make an effort to attract to the campus a group of citizens who showed interest in keeping up their education and understanding of contemporary developments. I, therefore, joined hands with a colleague(2) of mine in organizing over three decades ago an integrated series of weekly lectures for the benefit of selected citizens. For a series of about 40 lectures the participants were required to pay a nominal fee of Re. 1/- only. The lectures were delivered by leading academic lights of

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(1) Jaipur, at present capital of the Rajasthan State

(2) Dr. P.S.N. Prasad, at present India's Executive Director, International Monetary Fund, and formerly Director of the United Nations Asian Institute for Economic Development and Planning, Bangkok.

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the scholarly community. Efforts were made by these academicians to put across to the participants some of the latest and most relevant developments in simple language. We were quite impressed by the interest which these lectures created and the response that we got from the participants in this programme. At the end of the series of 40 lectures, a function was held in which the participants were given a certificate of attendance. This experience highlighted the need for such extra-mural activities on the part of formal academic institutions. Also it indicated that if properly tapped there was a big reservoir of eager learners in the community. They felt quite privileged to enter the precincts of the campus for learning something about the themes in which they were deeply interested. This task had been facilitated by the active involvement of the two of us who were organizers of this programme in some other civic activities. The broad lessons that we could learn from this experience were:

(a) Before launching upon programmes of extra-mural activities it is always desirable to create a receptive climate among the probable participants.

(b) In the initial programmes it is not desirable to charge fees on any considerable scale; however a nominal registration fee could be charged so that the participants could be formally enrolled.

(c) The language of communication has to be adjusted to suit the linguistic attainments of the participants.

(d) Special efforts should be made to persuade some of the top-notch academicians or professionals in the initial extra-mural programmes.

(e) A special function in which certificates of attendance are awarded to participants acts as an important motivational factor for the participants (this serves in a way the same rôle as the convocations/commencements in regular universities).

At present many of the 3,400 colleges in India are somewhat in the same position in which Jaipur was over three decades ago. It would be highly desirable on the part of these college authorities to make conscious efforts to come in touch with the community. A survey could be conducted to ascertain the needs in the broad field of continuing education for various sections of the community like the workers, the women, the small businessmen, and the professionals. The survey could bring forth the special needs of the community with regard to various kinds of programmes that could be organized by the college with the help of its faculty members and other professionals who may be interested in joining hands in launching such programmes of extra-mural activities and continuing education.

II

It was rather unfortunate that with the departure of the two of us who had launched this programme of extra-mural activities in the Maharajas College, Jaipur, the momentum could not be kept up. However, later on after my higher studies at Harvard and my professional work in the United Nations Secretariat at Lake Success when I returned to Jaipur to take charge of the Department of Economics in the newly founded University of Rajasthan, efforts were made to restart some of these activities. Thanks to the keen interest taken by a

the University Department largely provided academic guidance and other technical details organizational arrangements were in the hands of the Department of Continuing Education.

The Department of Adult Education also concerned itself with a survey of the ongoing literacy programmes, the needs of industrial workers for augmenting their productivity, and the training requirements of workers in the co-operative movement. The results of these surveys and studies were reflected in the programmes organized by the Department.

The University of Rajasthan also took interest in promoting organization of regular academic programmes through setting up of evening colleges and a special institute for providing formal Degree programmes through correspondence courses. Both these programmes are proving increasingly popular. The beginnings were made by offering courses for the first Degree. Now post-graduate programmes are also being organized in evening colleges and through correspondence courses.

In this way over a period of years, the University of Rajasthan at Jaipur developed a programme of adult education and continuing education to meet the requirements of the local community and professional workers.

The report of the Indian Education Commission (1964-1966) highlighted the importance of adult education in its widest connotation. The membership of this Commission in itself was an innovation. The Commission included, apart from 11 members from India, 5 full-members (and not merely consultants) from developed countries - one each from U.K., U.S.A., USSR., France and Japan. The Commission highlighted the rôle of universities and institutions of higher education in promoting research, formal academic programmes, correspondence courses and continuing education with special reference to the requirements of a developing country like India. The universities started taking more interest in this field and set up Indian Universities Adult Education Association (now known as the Indian University Association for Continuing Education). The Government of India accepted in principle the recommendations of the Commission in the field of adult education and allocated special funds to the University Grants Commission of India for supporting development of programmes in the field of adult education and continuing education in various Indian universities. About a dozen universities in India have now evinced keen interest in these programmes. The most important limiting factors, however, are the meeting of minds between the leaders of the campus and the community, and the availability of university-level trained personnel who could effectively man the departments of adult education and continuing education.

III

The Asian Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, was jointly sponsored by Unesco and Government of India as a Regional Centre for providing mid-career training for educational planners and administrators from various countries of the region. The Institute was founded in 1962. I joined it as its Director in July 1968. We recognize the importance of acquainting Asian educational planners and administrators with the concept and importance of adult education and continuing education. It was noted that the concept of continuing education for various sections of workers and professionals in the community needed an integrated approach. With this end in view the Institute organized during the International Education Year 1970 a Meeting of Experts on the theme of

forward-looking Vice-Chancellor,[1] deeply committed to the adult education movement, it was possible for the University of Rajasthan to launch upon a programme of extra-mural work and also formal academic studies in the field of adult education. I had the pleasure and privilege of giving the very first lecture in the Extension Lecture Series organized by the University.

The University of Rajasthan set up three Advisory Bodies for carrying out the programmes of Extension Lectures and continuing education, field surveys and "tailor-made" programmes for the benefit of industrial workers, women and school teachers, and programmes of formal professional instruction leading to a Bachelor's Degree[2] in Adult Education. The first Advisory Committee consisted largely of University teachers with a sprinkling of governmental administrators and business leaders. The second committee consisted largely of community leaders, businessmen, and Government officials with a sprinkling of University teachers. The third committee consisted largely of academicians and senior professional workers in the field of adult education. The composition of these committees reflected the need for involving academicians, community leaders, governmental and business administrators in helping the university to launch such programmes. The University had the benefit of technical collaboration with Canadian Experts in Adult Education which included among others Professor J.R. Kidd. The University also sought the advice of distinguished experts from all over India in chalking out its programmes in the broad field of adult education. These seminars were organized at Mount Abu and Bhopal.

At a later stage while I was myself Vice-Chancellor of Rajasthan University, a special seminar was organized to explore ways and means for involving the University in community problem-solving activities. A number of distinguished Indian and foreign experts participated in this Seminar. The Seminar highlighted the need on the part of Universities, specially in developing countries, to recognize their rôle in the field of community service specially for the weaker and neglected sections of the community. The University should try to identify their problems, bring together specialists from various disciplines to tackle these problems on an interdisciplinary basis, carry out some pilot projects towards finding possible solutions for these problems, and arouse further interest of governmental authorities and non-governmental organizations in tackling these issues.

The next phase in the programme of Adult Education and continuing education in the University of Rajasthan was emphasis on continuing education of professional groups like the engineers, lawyers, secondary school teachers and university teachers. Efforts were made to contact Government officials and professional leaders in these fields to identify their specific needs and then in consultation with some of these professionals and university academicians programmes of one to three weeks' duration were offered. In most cases these programmes were organized as a joint activity of the Department of Continuing Education and the appropriate University Department mainly concerned with such professional activity. In these programmes, the lecturers and discussion leaders included experts from outside Jaipur apart from university teachers and leading local professionals. The division of labour in this partnership was such that while

(1) Dr. Mohan Sinha Mehta, President, Indian Adult Education Association.
(2) The University of Rajasthan was the very first University in India to offer Bachelor's Degree in Adult Education.

Life-long Integrated Education. We were fortunate in having among our participants, apart from others, Professor Cyril O. Houle, of Chicago, and Messrs. Alan Thomas of Canada, Paul Lengrand of Unesco, Michiya Shimbori of Japan.

The Meeting noted that "the task before us is that of transformation of this semi-learning and semi-teaching society into a fully self-learning society for all times to come through various concrete measures". This task had to be performed at the governmental level not merely by the Ministry of Education but by several other ministries dealing with agriculture, industry, labour, health, railways, transport, defence, etc. Also non-governmental organizations dealing with industrial workers, agricultural labourers, and other professionals and para-professionals had to be fully brought into these programmes. The changing technology of education (specially through correspondence courses and radio and TV programmes) also had to be properly fitted into programmes of life-long integrated education.

The International Institute of Educational Planning, Paris, organized with the support of Unesco, a seminar on "Out-of-School Education for Development" in December 1971. During the course of this seminar it became clear that to deal with such programmes at international level it was necessary to bring about effective co-ordination among interested international agencies like Unesco, ILO, World Bank, FAO, WHO, Unicef etc.

Thus my limited experience indicates that for effective provision of life-long education at institutional, national and international levels, co-operation among key personnel of universities, government departments and professional organizations is very necessary in formulating relevant programmes of life-long education. At the same time for the implementation of these programmes effective co-ordination is necessary at the national level among various ministries of the government, and at international level among various Specialized Agencies of the United Nations.

IV

We may now consider the rôle which universities[1] and other institutions of higher education should play in promoting teaching, training and research relating to life-long education and the ways and means by which they could co-ordinate such activities with various ministries of the government and other non-governmental organizations.

The traditional rôle of universities has been to transmit knowledge and prepare the younger generation for recognized professions and to augment knowledge through research and studies. In recent decades, the universities have increasingly recognized their rôle in the application of knowledge and research in solving some of the urgent problems of the society. Their interest in the field of adult education and continuing education is however largely a 20th century phenomenon.

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(1) We shall use the term "universities" to include institutions which are formally designated as universities as well as other institutions of higher education which may be designated as institutes, colleges, etc.

The well-known universities of developed countries were for long largely of the "Ivy League" or "Oxbridge" variety. "Venturing outside the walls" was not a prominent feature of such universities. Adult education continued to be the "Cinderella" of the prevailing educational system. However, the situation has been undergoing a significant change during the past quarter of a century. There is growing concern about the problems of life-long education among the leading universities of the developed world. This movement has been strengthened by the interest taken by the "red bricks" and the "black bricks" as well as by the "plate glass" universities.

The universities in developing countries, specially in India, with which I am largely concerned have been a sort of carbon copies of the universities of metropolitan countries with which these developing countries were earlier connected. Ever since these developing countries won their freedom some attention has been given to the new rôle which a university in a developing country should perform. I shall, therefore, offer some thoughts in this connexion.

It is now accepted that even for performing its traditional rôle of transmission of knowledge to younger generation, the university will not be able to do so effectively if it were to confine itself to teaching programmes as a "single shot affair", that is offering them teaching programmes of three to six years, say during their early twenties and then leaving them on their own to face life during the next 50 years or so. Therefore, even for proper transmission of ever-growing knowledge, specially in the fields of science, technology and social sciences, it will be necessary for the universities to recall alumni at appropriate times, so that necessary programmes for updating their basic intellectual equipment are offered.

The alumni of universities could be classified at least under two categories; Category 1 consisting of those who are engaged in the teaching profession in schools or universities and Category 2 of those who are engaged in a variety of professional work.

It is suggested that the university should take special care to see that those who are teaching in schools, colleges and universities do go through various kinds of formal and non-formal programmes whereby they are able to keep in touch with the latest developments in their respective disciplines at least to the extent which is highly relevant for the duties that they are required to perform. Such a programme would require (a) interest on the part of the alumni in their own continuing education, (b) interest on the part of their employers in allowing these teachers time out for refresher courses, pre-promotional programmes, etc; necessary budgetary provision for the purpose will have to be made, and (c) an appropriate organizational structure of such recurrent education in a well-co-ordinated fashion. The university might identify some members of the faculty in each discipline who will specially undertake this responsibility. Of course, in the programmes or courses offered for recurrent education, it should be possible for as many members of university faculty as possible to participate. The university may also consider preparing abstracts of significant articles in professional journals, review articles on outstanding books that have appeared and circulating the same by post to its alumni interested in keeping up their professional efficiency.

As regards alumni who are working in various professions other than teaching programmes, recurrent education will have to be organized by the concerned department of the university with the help of leading lights of those respective professions. Often it is found that when one goes up the ladder, the need arises for

additional intellectual and professional equipment. For example, as an engineer gets promoted to the position of managerial responsibility, it becomes increasingly necessary for him to acquire acquaintenace with knowledge in the field of management. In a way the kind of "general knowledge" that is usually imparted in undergraduate programmes of universities, becomes necessary in a different intellectual mix for professional engineers, doctors, lawyers, community leaders etc.

The university should also take increasing interest in bringing within its fold those who have missed the opportunity of entering the university campus on the "first occasion". In other words, the university in a developing country should combine the rôles of university of the "first chance" and the university of the "second chance". This again would involve special selection of faculty members for this task, development of new kinds of curricula and adoption of methods of instruction appropriate to the age-group of the pupils of "second chance".

It appears to me that during the concluding quarter of the 20th century, the problems of life-long education will loom large. The universities, therefore, will have to devote more attention and resources for researches in the fields of continuing education and out-of-school education and preparing teachers and cadres of organizers and administrators of such programmes.

As things stand at present, the universities in developing countries are still groping for a clear light in the direction of their responsibilities and organizational set up for life-long education. I hope this International Symposium on Life-Long Education will be able to offer more useful guidelines in this direction, so that this much needed programme could be effectively launched and the limited resources of the developing countries could be used to the optimum for providing relevant and recurrent education to the peoples of developing countries.

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